

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

July 21, 1961

TO: Dr. Henry Kissinger

FROM: WWR

Attached forwarded as of
possible interest.

Very interesting

Attachment

Letter to Mr. Rostow
from William E. Griffith,
July 16, 1961, written
in Munich, Germany

MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
50 MEMORIAL DRIVE
CAMBRIDGE 39, MASSACHUSETTS

Berlin
June 21, 1961

Dear Walt,

Just a hurried note to give you some impressions on the Berlin situation. I have been here three days, and was in Bonn for two and Munich for three, so they cannot be much more than first impressions. However, I did talk with Reinkemeyer in Bonn, and here with Richert, the best DDR expert around.

One thing, I think, the West has achieved since November 1958: it has convinced Khrushchev that he cannot force the Western troops out of Berlin. The upcoming crisis, therefore (and I am more convinced than ever that in the late autumn something, probably the signing of a peace treaty), will happen) will be primarily about two things: the refugee flow and the problem of "upgrading" (via partial recognition) the DDR. The refugee flow (now at least 75,000 workers per year) is definitely serious, begun by the mass collectivization drive last year, it has spiralled because of the upcoming crisis. As to recognition, this seems to me what Khrushchev is basically after. Not that he expects the West to give diplomatic recognition at once or even soon, but he does expect to force the West to negotiate with the East Germans, and thus to give them de facto recognition. One may say, of course, we would negotiate with them only as agents of the Russians, but that is not what either the East Germans or the West Germans will believe. It is in respect to West Germany, it seems to me, that the real danger comes here. Sooner or later, once the U. S. is no longer felt by the West German population to be completely committed to the reunification, the West Germans will become unreliable allies for us. Negotiation with the DDR regime would be considered by them (correctly, I think) to be such a step. In the last analysis, it seems to me, quite apart from and in addition to our obligation to the West Berliners, the stake here is what the Soviets have since 1945 tried to get: Germany. The Germans will be watching us to see if we display any signs of weakness, indecision, or compromise; if we do, sooner or later they will begin to look elsewhere.

So far the trip has been very interesting; today I had a long talk with Oelssner in East Berlin. Tomorrow I'm driving to Warsaw.

As ever,

Bill
William E. Griffith

Mr. W. W. Rostow

cc: Henry Kissinger

TRANSCRIPTION - ORIGINAL FOLLOWS

Dear Walt,

I've just returned to West Germany after two weeks in Warsaw and a brief trip to Leipzig in East Germany, plus several days more in West Berlin, and I thought you might be interested in some of my impressions.

Poland. I don't think there have been any decisive changes since I was there last year. One might say that the situation is the same only more so. The general feeling of stabilization has further intensified, primarily because of a general feeling that the economic situation is improving somewhat, and also because the Poles have even less illusions than a year ago about the possibility of any basic change. As to economics, Lange and Drownowski both told me that the rate of savings is rising rapidly, vodka consumption is dropping, and sale of consumer durables (refrigerators, washing machines, television sets, motorcycles) is increasing. They both think the regime is too concerned about inflation (wage fund expenditures are rising), and Lange feels that the apparently excellent harvest will mop-up the excess purchasing power. (They both send you their best regards.) Political apathy has deepened still further, both as to internal and foreign politics. There is little or no interest in the Berlin situation or anticipation of a serious crisis, except at the top Party and Catholic levels. Church-state tension has considerably intensified, but I would doubt that any major crisis will occur. Gomulka dominates the Party completely. In other words, neither of the two necessary factors for a revolutionary situation (elite split and boiling mass discontent) exist. There is no great interest in the Sino-Soviet dispute and its implications for Eastern Europe, except at the top levels of the Party and the lay Catholics. The intellectuals know it exists but have few details and, due to this and to their general political apathy, in my opinion underestimate its significance. At the top levels of the Party, I would gather, very much is known of it, Gomulka is playing a major and profitable role in supporting Khrushchev, and they feel that Poland and the Polish Party can gain much from it. The same is felt, with much less information, at the top levels of the lay Catholics.

Given the above, which I think represents the almost universal opinion of Polish and foreign observers in Warsaw, I should personally at present doubt the desirability of attempting to use Poland as an area where effective counter-pressure could be put on Khrushchev re the Berlin issue. All Poles prefer a divided Germany and a divided Berlin, but, more importantly, the potential public opinion on which such pressure might be effectively exercised does not, in my opinion, now exist. When and if the Berlin crisis so intensifies that Poles become clearly aware of its dangers, and particularly if Sino-Soviet differences over it become apparent, such opportunity for pressure might well exist; at

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Hotel Continental
Munich, Germany
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East Germany. I was only for one day in Leipzig, but there and driving through the Zone one can see plenty of confirmation about the serious economic crisis. However, the flight to West Berlin, now at the highest rate since 1953, not only makes the economic crisis worse but also constantly draws off potential oppositional elements. Furthermore, contrary to 1953 and 1956, there are no splits in the top SED leadership; Ulbricht is in total control. I therefore seriously doubt that, short of something close to limited war or some major change in Soviet policies, a revolutionary situation exists in East Germany either. One thing, however, is certain; as far as East Germany (as distinguished from West Berlin) is concerned, it is not a question of preserving or changing the status quo on the part of either the U. S. or the U.S.S.R. On the contrary, the status quo is constantly and increasingly changing to the disadvantage of Ulbricht and the USSR.

Berlin. That being so--that we are winning and the USSR losing in East Germany--I would think this provides one more reason (were any more necessary) for holding an absolutely firm position on Berlin. Given the present situation in East Germany, the longer we maintain the status quo in Berlin, the more we gain and the more Khrushchev and Ulbricht lose.

The Sino-Soviet dispute, Albania and Yugoslavia. From what I heard in Poland on the first subject, and from what I have read recently there and here on the latter two, I would assume that Sino-Soviet relations have worsened somewhat again, that Khrushchev is on the offensive against Mao in respect to North Vietnam and North Korea (who have been wavering), that he has had considerable success, but that the Albanian problem remains unsolved for him. Yugoslavia (vd. the Popović visit to Moscow and some Pravda articles) apparently continues to deal itself more into the game, and I would assume that Khrushchev has now decided that he will at least try to exercise influence on the Yugoslavs so that the neutralist summit conference in Belgrade will be as pro-Soviet as possible (on Berlin it probably will be), even at the risk of intensifying tensions with Mao.

I'm leaving for Belgrade on Tuesday, and then for Sofia and Athens.

As ever,

Bill

William E. Griffith

Mr W. W. Rostow
Room 372
Executive Office Building
Washington 25, D. C.

cc: Max Millikan